SPIRIT POWER

MAY THIRZA CHURCHILL

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SPIRIT POWER

BY

MAY THIRZA CHURCHILL

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To my dear
Father and Mother
whose love, confidence, and
living faith have shown forth
the abiding righteousness of His Truth,
this book is lovingly dedicated.

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Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, what'er you may believe.
There is an inmost center in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error: and, to know
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

BROWNING: Paracelsus.

Man's Neglected Gift

MAN'S life shows growth in three directions: physical growth, mental growth, and spiritual growth. An abnormal or unusual physical development attracts attention promptly, but is ineffective in governing other lives. Intellectual growth comes more slowly than physical, attracts attention less promptly, but when once attained, exerts a wider and more lasting influence.

The ability to lead one's fellows in physical prowess or mental acumen is not a gift that is thrust upon one; neither is it to be accomplished by haphazard nor intermittent effort; but it is a result obtained by application along well-defined lines, by holding one's self to the regular, systematic training necessary to reach a desired goal. Both of these forms of development, in varying degrees of proficiency, are common, for school work is now planned so that the physical, as well as the mental, growth of the child is stimulated. Training in Spirit Power, however, is not, as

yet, in any school curriculum, nor have plans for its systematic development been formulated. Notwithstanding the effort required to increase ability in every other line, Spirit Power, it is expected, will be acquired unconsciously, without the natural application and discipline necessary in other lines of growth.

Youths with frail bodies are put under the care of trained gymnasium teachers, and a regular routine of exercise, diet, baths, and sleep persisted in until strength supplants weakness and frailty is exchanged for robust health. Early in life children begin the mental gymnastics which are to result in the pliable brains that will respond to their desire to know and to express their knowledge. Those who are mentally defective are placed in special schools that they may have the advantage of the most favorable environment. But the deepest power within the child, his greatest gift, that, if he knew how to use, could be directed so as to energize his whole being, is left untrained, ignored, wasted. There are few who do not believe in the power of spirit to rise above the weakness of the flesh and live

in an unseen hereafter, but they are few to whom Spirit Power is so real, so vital an element in life that it is used here and now to overcome in the flesh. Many secret tears of shame over habits that canker the very heart of life could be transformed into the brightest drops of joy if we knew how to apply Spirit Power to the problem. There are many hopeless hearts carrying heavy burdens of physical disease whose heaviness could be changed to buoyancy if we knew how to stimulate to positive action the power that is wrapped in the indwelling Spirit.

Spirit Power is so subtle, so hidden from physical senses, so varied in its forms of expression, that recognition of this force working in a life must necessarily be slow; it is accepted only after many indisputable proofs of its presence. It is like the fragrance of a flower, pervasive but elusive, definite though imperceptible, irrefutable though intangible. No one has ever seen the fragrance of a flower, nor handled it, nor, however acute the senses, heard it make a sound. Nevertheless the fragrance is often detected in a room after the flower has been removed. Just as unconscious-

ly does the spirit of man influence his fellows. It is a positive, powerful something that repells or antagonizes in some people, and in others is so attractive it is a joy to respond to them. One person coming into a social gathering may suddenly change the atmosphere of a dull prosaic evening into happy hours well spent; and again in the casual passing of a stranger on the street an inward instinct thrusts you to the opposite side of the walk. One radiated an atmosphere so repellent that something within seemed to gasp with fear, while the other carried a hidden charm that attracted like a powerful magnet. Great artists have tried to reproduce this attractive, ennobling radiation, and the halo encircling the heads of saints is the result of their efforts; but it can no more be pictured than you can picture the wind. Effects from its action are clear, positive, undeniable, but the Spirit itself ever remains invisible to physical senses.

In that Great Book of Biographies that has been translated into more tongues than any other volume and read by more people than any other literature, there are many accounts of men

who were leaders in their age and accomplished great things in their generation not by might nor force of arms, not by any physical nor political influence, but by the Spirit that dwelt in them and used them. Through their faith in the Spirit that prompted and guided them they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,"[1] and by their obedience to that Spirit established confidence in an Unseen Power who works for the betterment of mankind. The lives of these men teach that their power is the power any man may exert who believes God and takes Him at His word; who dares to believe that word when it is contrary to his own experience, contrary to all human reason; even though it seem to be opposed to natural law. Many and varied must be the experiences before the individual himself has such confidence in the Unseen Power working in him that he can say with

[1] Heb. 11: 33, 34.

Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."[1] Yet it is to such an apex of faith that these great men gradually grew.

The first character to stand out clearly in this particular is Abraham, and he is especially helpful, for a close study of his life gives an inkling of how the Spirit force grew within him and finally dominated him. You and I do not take a man's say so for the presence of this power in his life. We judge of its presence by the way he meets temptation, the way he works out the problems of his life, by its manifestation in the trivial duties of daily living. So Abraham's life is judged by the same method as we judge men today—by the result obtained by yielding obedience to this hidden force in his life.

Like seeds hidden beneath the earth's mold that grow long in silence and darkness before coming to notice, so Abraham, buried for seventy-five years in the darkness of a heathen superstition and environment, grew silently, unobtrusively into the knowledge of one God. One day, in obedience to the call of his God, he left country and friends and

[1] Job 13: 15.

began to come into prominence by this first public step of faith. From now on many and varied are the experiences to build up, to test, to establish that faith. At first simple, every-day experiences that would naturally come to a man in a new country with strange foreign neighbors and the perils and discomforts of a new environment. In some hardships his faith is at low tide, but this shows how human a character he was and how natural and gradual his growth. Other recorded incidents show him growing in confidence in the power and wisdom of his God until he reaches the climax of faith in being willing, when put to the test, to give up his most cherished treasure.

Such Spirit Power has its roots so deep in the eternal springs of life, is so broad in its scope that it takes all the numerous petty details of a life, as well as its larger experiences, to prove its power—nay, to prove its very existence. The effect of Abraham's life is so far-reaching that today—four thousand years after his decease—he is revered as a spiritual father, not only by Christians, but by Jews and Mohammedans as well.

Very early in life the child Samuel yielded to the persistent Voice within him, and it was a rough and rugged path by which the great prophet was led to the height of absolute confidence in an Unseen Spirit to direct his life. In obedience to the Divine Voice within him he made and unmade kings and surpassed the great High Priest himself in his powerful leadership of the people.

Shall Moses be overlooked?—Moses who through communion with the same Spirit was able to free a race of slaves and transform them into a mighty nation? His life proved his consciousness of the power and presence of God as the only source of his strength and greatness. Then, again, there is Elisha who, through the power of this Spirit in him, restored the Shunammite's son to his mother's arms ([1]) and through the same power quickened the spirit of Naaman so that his leprosy disappeared, ([2]) and by the same Spirit opened the eyes of his timid servant that he might see the Unseen Hosts of the Lord who fought for and guarded the faithful prophet. ([3])

[1] II Kings 4: 32-37. [2] II Kings 5: 14.
[3] II Kings 6: 15-17.

The Book is filled with records of those who heard the Voice of the Spirit and with different degrees of persistency and faithfulness let the Spirit work in them. These are not unusual men in the sense that God could do these great works only through these men, but they are types or examples of how He can work in any one who dares to yield a perfect and implicit obedience to divine promptings. God is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever;"[1] it is the medium through which He may work that changes and makes the work meagre in some generations and mighty in others.

None of these men taught how to recognize the Voice of the Spirit, nor how, nor where to seek it. They lived in conformity with its teachings or promptings, and men marvel at the result accomplished. When Jesus came, however, He not only did the works, but taught how He did them and intended His followers to seek and to use the same power, since He said, "The works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." [2]

[1] Heb. 13: 8. [2] John 14: 12.

Nineteen hundred years have passed since Jesus spoke those words. Tremendous advances have been made in the world of sciences; churches, philanthropies, and missionary zeal have done much to better physical conditions and elevate the standards of civilization for the race; educational privileges are broad and free; but with all the advantages little progress has been made in the knowledge of how to use Spirit Force for eliminating wrong conditions within and about us. We are enslaved by evil habits and know not how to find the place of freedom; we are harassed and hampered by physical diseases beyond the skill of medical science and our days are passed in an atmosphere heavy with anxiety, worry, and fear in spite of Jesus' efforts to arouse us by word and example to seek and find the place of peace, the fountain of health, the way to perfect freedom. Our churches teach the facts of the life of Jesus, the wonderful works He did, and how by His death He proved the power of Spirit to be greater than that of a sealed tomb. This knowledge is in our heads, and we are taught to believe in His omniscience and omnipresence and

to say our prayers to Him, but we are not taught how to apply His power to our every-day problems. We are not taught how to exercise our individual spirits so as to bring to our personal use the power He used and that He said was for us. We go to church and study or read our Bible; we say many prayers and sometimes under heavy pressure truly pray, but we are not taught how to pray that it may be effective. We know not how to reach the source of power, of wisdom, of help in every time of need, and because of these failures there has spread a current belief that there is nothing more to religion than a profession, or if there is some power in it to be possessed, as the biographies in the Bible teach, much of that power has been lost in its course down the ages.

The Secret of Spirit Power

THAT there is a real power in prayer must be true or it would not be so universal; for in every age, in every nation, in every tongue, people pray. The vital point of the question is, how to pray so as to obtain results.

Occasionally people are met who say they do not believe in prayer, but generally they mean they do not believe in the formula of prayer, and at heart are very much like a neighbor of ours who was frank to say he had no use for prayer. One morning, though, under sudden stress, he prayed so his neighbors heard him and turned in his distress as instinctively to the Unseen One for help as though all his life he had obeyed Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing." (1)

His mother in lighting the gas range had an explosion that not only shook the house but lifted the lids, and a kettle of water from the stove. Her son,

[1] I Thess. 5: 17.

expecting to find some one terribly hurt, flew down stairs crying, "Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!" There was a splendid opportunity for a fatality, but some power saved that household that morning from disaster and prevented serious results.

Frequently prayers are said, but often it is a mechanical operation indulged in as unthinkingly as the daily routine of dressing. I remember visiting in a minister's family during special revival services in his church. His wife, an earnest woman, devoted to her family and work, returned from a women's prayer-meeting and made this confession:

"I was so ashamed of myself today," she said. "We were all kneeling, and while Mrs. B— was leading in prayer, I caught myself noticing the church carpet and thinking, 'We must have a new carpet here; I didn't know it was so ragged.' Then I remembered that we were there for prayer and realized the necessity of keeping my eyes closed if I were going to pray in spirit and in truth."

On rising from my knees after prayer

one night, I found my room-mate convulsed with repressed laughter; and when I asked the cause of her merriment, she said, "How many times are you saying your prayers tonight? This is the second time you have been on your knees." So mechanically had it been done the first saying of prayers could not even be recalled. These are not uncommon experiences. They could be duplicated times without number, but they help to show how frequently we say prayers, and how seldom we pray. Shortly after this experience I began to write my evening prayer, so as to form the habit of concentration and exactness. After many months of this form of prayer, it was a happy surprise to look back through the book used for this purpose and find that real progress had been made in understanding the purpose of prayer. That there is a law in prayer by which results are obtained is true. That Jesus knew the law and conformed to it, His life proves. To find that law and then obey it is man's first duty if he would pray effectively; if he would come into positive, active Spirit Power.

James said, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss."(1) It was startling to learn that this might not mean asking for the wrong things, but asking in the wrong way; and with the broader vision of the meaning, came also the impulse to seek and learn how to ask aright; how to ask so as to receive. Some progress has been made—enough, indeed, to give the assurance that the method will lead to larger knowledge and greater power.

There was no subterfuge in Jesus, no mystery, no evasion as to how He did His great works. Very clearly He tells the secret of His power. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." (2)

"For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (3)

"I can of mine own self do nothing." (4)

"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that

[1] James 4: 3. [2] John, 5: 19.
[3] John, 5: 26. [4] John, 5: 30.

dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (1)

It is impossible then for us to express the same power that Jesus had in His life except the same Spirit dwell in us that dwelt in Him. If He could do nothing of Himself, no more can we; if He was dependent upon the Unseen One for wisdom, for judgment, for power, none the less dependent are we. He must be allowed to work in us and through us as He worked in Jesus. The first step, therefore, in seeking the way to effective prayer and Spirit Power is to ask Him to possess us. The willingness of the Father to grant this request Jesus made very positive. The greatest hindrances to this accomplishment are our own unwillingness and ignorance. We know not how to yield to Him, how to become conscious of His presence. His entrance will not be seen; no physical eye will witness His coming; at first there may not be even an emotional response, and seldom is there any immediate consciousness of communion with Him. If, however, every day, time will be taken to exercise the natural spirit—

[1] John, 14: 10.

God's first gift that makes us living souls and not dead bodies—if one is willing to take time to exercise this part of his being and make real and intimate the close relationship between his spirit and the Infinite Spirit, there will be an inward awakening to the knowledge of the Universal Spirit operating in the innermost of being with power.

"What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" (1) God is Spirit; He is also the "Father of spirits;" (2) and to worship Him, to know Him, the Great, Unseen, Universal Spirit that can work with such tremendous power in a willing subject, is possible only through the natural spirit that was put within us at our birth. This is the individual's connecting link between the outer material world of sense and form and the inner Spirit world of wisdom and power. If the spirit within us has had a dormant, passive existence, drifting with the tide of circumstances and dominated by the physical senses and desires, much exercise may be needed before it is able to restore to consciousness the transform-

[1] I Cor., 2: 11. [2] Heb. 12: 9.

ing power of the Infinite One working at the center of being.

To lead a lazy, indolent life physically or mentally means loss of power. This is a recognized fact, and so the man who seeks success acknowledges the value of mental and physical gymnastics. In the inner realm, also, the same law holds good, and the spirit must have its quota of exercise if it is ever to be able to use its inherent powers. The initial exercise comes with the asking of His Spirit to possess us, and it puts into practical application one of Jesus' first rules for prayer:

"When ye pray, believe that ye receive and ye shall have." (1) Having asked for this gift, do not keep repeating the request. That is unnecessary since we are not heard for our much speaking. Now time must be spent in realizing that the gift asked for is granted. How is this to be done? By taking time every day — remember every day—to put aside all thoughts of the day's pleasures or problems or duties and to hold consciously, persistsistently this thought: "His Spirit dwells in me. I have asked Him to

[1] Mark 11: 24.

control me and guide me from within. **He is here.** This day He lives and moves and has His being in me; and by His power quickening me, I overcome. I yield myself to Him that I may be at-one-ment with Him as Jesus was at-one-ment with Him." To hold this or any similar thought that makes positive His presence within is the first step in Spirit Power. To do this once would have no more effect on one's spiritual development than one lesson in the gymnasium would have on the muscular development; but if persisted in daily, slipping into the wonderful world of sleep wrapped in its control, awakening to the consciousness that this All-powerful, Infinite Spirit is in the innermost of being, helping this Spirit to be dominant by yielding self to His power and giving up our own desires to obey His promptings, positive knowledge will follow. There will be a deep life aroused within which brings a power to feel first and later to understand the right course in times of emergency; that shows how to influence by the spirit the spirit in another; that makes clear His will in us. Instead of thinking of Him as in the heavens or a power working

from without, there is a real positiveness that "The Spirit of the living God dwelleth in you;" ([1]) that "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." ([2]) During this period many new experiences come to the seeker. Experiences that Paul taught the early Christians to look for, to expect. How positive he made the communion between our spirit and the Infinite! "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." ([3])

A joint-heir with Christ! To share equally with Him in the power He used in doing the Father's will! A joint-heir with Him in the power that overcomes temptation from without as well as from within. A joint-heir with Him in the power to be all we desire to be and to do effectively our work in the world. Would you claim your inheritance? Then take the first step and begin to grow into the consciousness that the Spirit of Power is not in the heavens alone, not without you only, but also

[1] I Cor. 3: 16.
[2] Phil. 2: 13.
[3] Rom. 8: 16, 17.

within you, waiting for you to claim your birthright.

However far one may travel into the realms of Spirit Power, this spiritual exercise, like the scales in music to the musician, is never foregone, never left in the distant background. Just as the young musician practices his scales many times a day, so the beginner in his search for Spirit Power must persist regularly in this exercise until spirit strength is developed and spiritual consciousness dawns. Growth in this department of one's being is as natural a process as in the other departments. Exercising the body brings muscular development and physical power; exercising the brain brings mental strength and intellectual power; exercising the spirit will follow the same law and result in spirit strength and spirit power. In each line of development the will has its active part. By the force of his will the lad holds himself to the drill on the running track, the cold bath, and the denial of certain foods; by the same will power he holds himself to the mental gymnastics in mathematics, or reproduction, or memorizing choice bits of prose or verse and learns to concentrate

on the subject-matter in hand. Not by the force of one's will can the Spirit be compelled to take possession, yet the will plays an important part here. God does not superimpose the control of His Spirit upon us, but also He denies Himself to no one who truly desires Him. Since Spirit guidance is never thrust upon one, the first step is to will to let Him control; the next step, to hold back with the will the thoughts that usually dominate, and consciously to retain the thought that He is here. Our bodies are material things and are strengthened and built up by material food; but spirit is made of different stuff, and is strengthened or weakened by the thoughts imposed upon it. Man cannot force the Spirit of God into control, but by his will he can hold back the material thought food with which he has been feeding his spirit in order that it may receive and assimilate that which will nourish and give it power.

The way a magnet obtains its power may help to make clear the growth process of the natural spirit. A magnet can be made by putting a piece of hard steel near a magnet and letting it rest there for a time. Nothing will be seen

to pass from the one into the other, yet that piece of steel will catch something from the magnet that gives it the power to attract just like the original. The steel does not strain after the power nor in any way force it to come in, but just rests passively near it, and quietly the subtle power possesses it. Take it away and test it; it has the same qualities as the original—the power to attract to itself and of infusing its power into the object attracted. So man holding back by his will the noisy, earth thoughts (the non-conductor of Spirit force) that usually control, lets his spirit rest in the conscious presence of the Source of Power that His power may be infused into him.

This is the first step in learning to pray effectively. When this at-one-ness is accomplished, the Spirit indites our petitions for us. Then is brought to pass the truth of Jesus' statement: "When ye have settled down in me, and I have settled down in you, then ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"(1).

[1] John 15: 7.

The Spirit Seeking Supremacy

NE of the sentences used in the opening service of many churches is, "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him," (1) and often had it been a source of wonder to me why the waves should stop murmuring, the leaves cease from rustling and the birds from singing. "If 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' " (2) I thought, "when He is in the midst, that is the time when water-brooks should sing, the birds should carol, and the trees on a thousand hills should clap their hands for joy." One Sunday morning in an instant of time, the whole idea was changed. The congregation rose and the pastor said, "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him," and immediately there came ringing within me these words, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the living God?" (3)

[1] Hab. 2: 20. [2] Ps. 24: 1. [3] I Cor. 6: 19.

Then came the realization that "the earth" which was "to keep silence before him" was not nature's music but my own sordid, selfish, earth thoughts. These were to be held aside; and in doing so, I, who am the door-keeper of my own temple, would thereby be giving free access in the innermost of being to Him who waits for an opportunity to give the needed blessing. He who enlightens the understanding and clarifies the vision, He who shows the way of escape from every temptation, He who strengthens with might in the inner man, He is ever waiting for us to hold back our own thoughts which fill the temple and let Him in. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:" He says, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him," [1] but one absorbed in his own thoughts does not hear the knocking; or if he hears, he makes no effort to prepare a place for Him. The man who seeks Spirit Power, however, must learn to hold his own thoughts in abeyance if he would be able to exclaim with Keplar, "I think Thy thoughts after Thee, O God!"

This first spiritual exercise that has

[1] Rev., 3: 20.

been suggested will give a different location in life to God, and will also have a cleansing, purifying effect upon the temple itself. No one who reads these words will need to be taught how to keep his temple clean on the outside, but all have not learned to keep it clean on the inside; and if the passerby could look within, he would see filthy nests of foul thoughts which may hatch forth some day into ugly words and evil deeds that a lifetime of effort can not undo. It is true that one cannot prevent evil suggestions from coming; neither can one prevent the birds from flying over the head, but it is not necessary to let them make nests in the hair. An old adage says, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," but is it not inward cleanliness, not merely outward, that is meant? If the thoughts of the heart are clean and pure and wholesome, then the thinker may know that he is pure in heart, and Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." [1] Only these steps: clean thoughts keep one pure in heart; the pure in heart shall see God. It is the thought world then that controls the condition of the temple

[1] Matt., 5: 8.

within, and that way back in Jewish history was recognized of vital importance in the saying, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (1) It is the secret, hidden thought of the keeper of the temple that invites or repels the Spirit that spoke and worked in Jesus, and whose control in any life brings peace and purity and light and happiness.

The effect of living one's life in obedience to the promptings of that Spirit who knows the laws of life is first felt within in the quietness and assurance and buoyancy of the natural spirit. The spirit is consciously drawing power from the Infinite One, is feeding on the Bread of Life, and growing in ability to interpret the will of the Infinite. Unwholesome, ugly thoughts of doubt, malice, passion, revenge are supplanted by thoughts suggested by the Spirit; and because the mind is stayed on Him, there is perfect peace within, whatever the condition of the outer environment.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that to live in this way means immunity from trial or temptation. Was Abra-

[1] Prov. 23: 7.

ham exempt? or Paul? or Christ? If there were no trials, how could the value of this power in life be proven? If there were no testing times, how could strength be established? Jesus never promised freedom from trial; instead He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." ([1]) This statement is followed by an exhortation which shows the spirit in which it is to be met. "Be of good cheer." This is heroic. Cheerfulness under trial requires a strong spirit unshaken in its confidence that it is a temporary condition or necessary for the building up of the inner man. It is the expectation of a happy result to be attained that keeps one cheerful and patient under trying circumstances; that lifts one above the physical or mental discomfort. Some people under trial are like a collapsed balloon, helpless creatures clinging to the earth and weighted by their own thoughts of the unhappy conditions; but these same people might be infused with a power that would lift the thoughts above the painful situation and, like the inflated balloon, keep the spirit in the higher ether. The power

[1] John, 16: 33.

infused is Spirit Power that gives positive assurance that in some way known to Him it will result in the greatest good. To bring about this greatest good, however, it is necessary to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;" (1) not at the details of the disaster, but the Power working from within to bring order out of chaos and peace from unrest. Imagine yourself meeting trials by looking for the good that is to grow out of them; by seeking through the Spirit the way of escape that God has made for every temptation that may beset His people. Can you picture anyone meeting trials in this way and not growing strong in spirit and cheerful because he lives above the trial instead of in it? Following the exhortation, "Be of good cheer" Jesus makes this statement, "I have overcome the world," implying that in so doing He has shown us how to overcome also by the same Spirit in us.

While forming the habit of recognizing Him within, another exercise naturally coincides and is put into practice with every difficulty that arises, with

[1] II Cor. 4: 18.

every uncertainty as to the right course, with every problem in life. Instead of asking advice from this friend and that and becoming more confused because their advice does not agree; instead of seeking help outside, look within to the Spirit who seeks to guide you and ask, "What do You want me to do?" Naturally in the first attempts the answer will be uncertain, unsatisfactory, for the Voice within is not as yet a familiar voice; neither does the individual spirit become immediately responsive to the Infinite in its ability to receive or interpret for you. But keep at it; persist in it; aim for the goal of which Isaiah speaks, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (1)

Paul, in persecuting the Christians, believed he was doing God service. His heart was right in that he wanted to serve God. He was facing God-ward through a terrible work but with an honest soul, and God made clear to him his mistake. Then with Paul it was, Right about, face! and, leaving the

[1] Is. 30: 21.

ranks of the persecutors, he allied himself with the persecuted Christians. In your problem, if there is no positive prompting, choose what you believe to be right and go ahead, trusting that if the choice is a wrong one He will stop you. Then if not permitted to go the chosen way, accept the overruling with a grateful heart because you have been held to the right course. Is a text needed to assure our right to ask for such guidance? Listen: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." [1] He whom you ask is not far off in the heavens now but is consciously within you; and the unwavering faith in which you ask is not necessarily in the way or the method you have chosen, but that you will be led to do the right thing to bring about the desired result.

A friend who was seeking this positive knowledge within herself came to me one day very downcast and said:

"I am so discouraged. I did trust Him with a certain problem; I did what I thought He wanted me to do as well

[1] James 1: 5.

as I could, but it has all gone wrong," and the hot tears coursed swiftly from their hidden wells. I knew the keen edge of her grief was not so much because the material thing had gone wrong as that she had failed to understand Him, and she thought He had disappointed her. Very gently I said:

"I know you tried to do as He wished as well as you understood, and He knows it, too. We both know also that all things are working together for your good because you have put your trust in Him. I do not know the nature of your problem, but I do know that it has not gone wrong as you think and some day you will know it, too."

In less than a week her eyes were shining with happiness as she said:

"The problem has been solved, and the result is beyond my greatest expectations. What I thought was all wrong was the best thing that could have happened, and I am so ashamed of my tears and my lack of faith."

How often people are deterred from taking up a new line of work or attempting a larger sphere of usefulness because they doubt their ability to carry it successfully. If the larger work is

accepted in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit, there will be no failure; for He who calls also gives the ability to do if one continues to rely on Him for guidance and strength. Just to have faith, to believe He is within, is not sufficient, will not work out salvation, for "faith without works is dead." (1)

Constantly that faith must be given expression in doing what the Spirit prompts. Obedience to these promptings as well as they are understood brings clearer promptings and larger understanding.

It has been said that this way of living is not exempt from trials, but many of the burdens carried now will be thrown off, and the new ones will be of a different nature. Those that are carried now are often of our own creating and the result of walking blindly and ignorantly. The man who travels with his eyes shut must expect hard knocks and disagreeable experiences that would have been avoided if he had used his gift of sight; and he who goes through life with his spirit senses inactive, untrained, will reap a similar experience.

[1] James 2: 20.

The first hardships will be in eliminating the discordant elements in the life, and this is often attended by great unrest, disappointment, and discouragement; but do not be afraid of it. Trust Him who is preparing you for power and do not be impatient over the process nor with yourself. When the leaven is put into the flour, the whole mass is not changed immediately. For a time it is as heavy a lump of dough as though no transforming element had been put into it; but give it time, and the leaven will work persistently through it until the whole mass is changed into a useful product. So is it when Spirit Power is taken into the life; not instantly is one transformed into a being whose life shows the fruits of the Spirit; but if given freedom to work, the Divine Leaven will permeate every department and perfect its transforming work.

Is there something which has been withheld from your life you greatly desired; or some disagreeable element in it you long to have eliminated? One of these conditions might fit every life. In applying Spirit Power to such a problem, how would one go to work, and what result might be expected?

The first thing to do is to let go of it yourself and give it over to Him. Say to Him as you would to any visible friend in whose wisdom and power you have perfect confidence, "You know how greatly I desire or am harassed by this. I do not know how to deal with it, and I give it to You knowing that You will work it out for me," or speak in any way that will make Him a real personality to you, and then leave it with Him. As much as possible keep it out of your thoughts; do not dwell on it, increasing its ugliness by imaginings or enhancing its attractiveness by details it might never possess if you had it. "How keep it out," do you ask?

Every time it comes into your thought world turn it over to the Spirit within you and leave it there for Him to carry. When circumstances require you to come in personal contact with the problem, meet it unflinchingly, confident that the Spirit within you will speak and act through you so that you will do the best that is possible under the circumstances. Persist in this until a change takes place and one of two things will happen: either the thing desired will come to pass; or you will

be so changed you would not have it different if you could. There are two ways of helping people carry a burden. One is to take the load upon yourself so that they do not have even the physical exercise of carrying it; the other way is to make the spirit of the bearer so buoyant, so happy, his burden is no weight to him and the carrying of it becomes a pleasure. Whether the change takes place in the outer condition or in one's self is immaterial; it is relief from unfulfilled desire that is wanted. Therefore, "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." (1)

It is the Spirit who is now within you to whom you give the burden; and in this experience it may be that you, too, will prove the truth of David's expression: "The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," (2) or the meaning may be clearer if the phrasing be changed to the Infinite Spirit said unto my natural spirit, sit thou here, etc.

[1] Ps. 37: 45. [2] Ps. 110: 1.

This is the quickest, surest way to come into your birthright of happiness —not a temporary, effervescent happiness, but a deep abiding joy that no person, no condition, no environment can destroy because its source is deep in the eternal springs of life. Each experience becomes a stepping-stone by which to mount out of the self-life into a more intimate life with the Spirit; out of a life of discord into one of harmony with the Maker of our being; out of a life where our will crosses His into a life where our will is at-one-ness with His, and then will there be perfect peace. The richest cannot buy it with gold, neither need the poorest be without it, for it is without money and without price; but each must seek it for himself, and yielding to His promptings from within find his own pathway of peace, his own harbor of happiness. Whosoever you may be, whatever may be your condition, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." (1)

[1] II Chron. 15: 2.

Finding Freedom

THE enemy who lurks beside the path of him who walks this way, who sometimes grips the heart with an icy hand and defeats the cherished purpose is none other than our own Fear. We know he is a creature of our own imagination, an unreal thing, that has power only as we give it to him, but we permit him to hinder progress here as elsewhere. How often are we deterred, held back, conquered by this phantom of our own thoughts. It works the greatest injury in preventing us from attempting a larger sphere of usefulness or a higher plane of living. Over many a meagre life that had large possibilities in it might be written "Conquered by the Fear of Failure."

From Genesis to Revelation, again and again, in many different phrasings resounds the command, "Thou shalt not be afraid." There is no command broken so frequently, so unthinkingly as "Fear thou not," and it is usually followed by a reason, "for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy

God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." ([1])

"Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." ([2])

"I am with thee to deliver thee." ([3])

The terms of the covenant between God and man are very clear: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them," ([4]) I will do so and so, and the terms hold good in our day and generation. God has never repudiated them. The trouble is with us; we fail to keep His commandments. He says: "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil;" ([5]) but if we never hear His Voice, nor take time to listen to Him, nor train our spirits to respond to the Infinite Spirit—if we do not do our part, how then can we say there is no power in religion? He who has not learned the happy secret of casting all care upon Him must worry through troubles or harden himself to them

[1] Is. 41: 10. [2] Josh. 1: 9. [3] Jer. 1: 19.
[4] Lev. 26: 3. [5] Prov. 1: 33.

because the religion of Jesus Christ is to him only a word, not a power. (1) He may even be a worshiper of Jesus, but there is as much difference between the religion of the worship of Jesus Christ and the religion of Jesus Christ as there is between merely professing Christ and possessing Christ.

He who holds the Burden Bearer far off in his thought is not able to shift the weight of his burden to Him, for that is possible only for the one who holds Him close in the innermost of being. He it is who knows the truth of Isaiah's words, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." (2) His confidence grows with every new experience that calls forth his trust until he numbers himself among those of whom it is said, "Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded; or did any abide in His fear, and was forsaken; or whom did He ever despise, that called upon Him?" (3)

In times of an epidemic how subtly fear enters and begins its undermining work in preparation of a victim. The

1 I Cor. 4: 20. 2 Is. 26: 3. 3 Ecclesiasticus 2: 10.

air is laden with fears, and they travel on invisible wings from home to home, and we know not how to protect ourselves from them. Fear belongs to the thought world and can only be conquered by thought—a thought greater, more powerful, more positive than that stimulated by fear. Has God prepared for this? Has He given us any promise with which to strengthen the spirit within and make us conquerors over the fear that seeks to lay us low? Indeed He has, and it is so great, so comprehensive that it strikes beyond the fear, to the epidemic that engendered it, and protects the one who practices it, protects him who feeds his spirit on it. Listen: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." (1) This promise is fulfilled for the one who is living his life in obedience to the Voice of the Spirit within, "because" as Isaiah said, "he trusteth in thee."

[1] Ps. 91: 5-8.

Oh, to be able to walk the path of life fearlessly; to take up one's daily duties without dread; to meet difficulties and not be dismayed because of the inward consciousness that no evil can befall—would not this be happiness indeed? Oh, to be strong in the positiveness of a close connection with the Unseen Power that is able to keep from falling and prompts to wise speech and right action in every emergency—is it not worth the seeking?

There are other ways also in which this habit of living in obedience to His promptings shows power. Consider the effect produced when this Divine Energy is used to overcome some evil habit. Spirit Power when applied to such a problem takes away the desire to do the evil thing, literally creates a new condition and sets the prisoner free from the invisible chains that bound him. In modern life are many examples of men transformed by this same unseen but powerful agency. John B. Gough, staggering through the streets or lying in a gutter, is a brilliant illustration. He let this mystic energy sweep through him in maximum power and not only recovered his own man-

hood but redeemed many another life as with untiring zeal he went up and down the country preaching God's power to save from sin. An illustration that came under my own observation may help to make clear the application of this power.

A half dozen school girls formed a "smoker." They would meet in some secluded place and smoke cigarettes just because they thought it was a smart and racy thing to do. After some weeks of this sport, they agreed to give up the club and stop smoking. It was then I heard of one girl's pitiable condition from her own lips:

"All the girls said they would stop, and they have," she said, "but I find I can't stop."

"What do you mean by saying you can't stop?" I asked.

"Why, I stop for a time, and then the craving comes over me so strong that I'd smoke at any cost. I've done it over and over again. I just can't stop. Last week I vowed I'd punish myself, if I ever did it again, by telling you, and I've done it again."

"Don't you see you are walking on the edge of a precipice?" I said. "You

are going to stop! The next time you smoke I am going to do the punishing if you will agree to do whatever I say."

She promised, and I left her with the assurance that I should think out her punishment at once and put it in a sealed envelope to be called for the next time she failed. A week or more had passed when I received this brief message: "I need the envelope." It was some time before I heard how hard for her had been the obedience to my instructions, but she carried them out to the letter. In a few weeks came another request for the envelope, and again she held herself to the stiff punishment demanded. The third envelope, however, was different. There was no physical punishment in it; it required no screwing up of one's courage to do a hard thing; it appeared so simple on the surface that, when she had read it, she laughed in my face, saying:

"That's perfectly ridiculous. It will never do one bit of good; it's too easy to help anyone."

"Try it," I answered, "and then report."

In two days she was exclaiming, "I can't do it; it's the hardest thing I ever

did in my life. It's absolutely impossible for me. You'll have to write another."

"No," I said, "you promised to do as I told you, and I hold you to your promise. Every alternate Sunday I want your report on the time spent in this way."

This was the task given. For ten minutes every day she was to go alone and with eyes shut was to think this one thought: "God is greater than this, and He helps me to overcome. His Spirit in me cleanses me from this desire." Spring lengthened into summer, and there was no call for the fourth envelope. School closed, and she left town for her vacation, but regularly she mailed me her report. It was late in July when there came a joyous letter of victory. "I have had three of the stiffest temptations I ever had," she wrote, "and I don't even want it. I'm free! I'm free! I'm free!"

This young friend of mine was no weak-willed girl. From earliest childhood she had shown a fearless, positive nature and had ruled her friends and family with a strong hand. If she had been lacking in will power, she never

would have held herself to the hard tasks given; but neither will power, nor dread of punishment, nor shame that followed failure—nothing held her back when possessed by the craving; but where human means failed, the power of His Spirit conquered.

In the effort to conquer by will there is the tense nerve condition, the set jaw and clenched fist attitude of "I won't do it; I won't." In overcoming by the Spirit there is no tenseness, no nerve strain, but just a quiet relaxing, a loosening of nerve tension and letting His Spirit control. There is no habit so thoroughly ingrained but that it can be overcome by this power.

In helping another to come into this freedom it is not to pray, "O God, help him! O God, save him!" God is more willing to do that than we can possibly be to have Him do it. The helper's part is to strengthen the victim's faith in God's willingness and power and to show him how to open the way that the Spirit may possess him and do the transforming work. Not to keep repeating, "God help him;" but in the quietness of your own spirit with perfect assurance that His power is fully

equal to the case, to hold positively, "God, Thou art here. Thy Spirit in him takes away the desire for this evil thing; by Thy Spirit in him, he overcomes." It is again the application of "When ye pray, believe that ye receive, and ye have," only now you are making positive a new condition for another when before you did it for yourself. Now you are supplementing another's effort by infusing into him the confidence in this Unseen Power that you have proven. You cannot change conditions, but you can show another how to open the heart's door to Him who can change conditions. Your faithful obedience to the promptings of His Spirit within you will quicken the spirit in another, and he will catch from you confidence and faith to let His Spirit work within him.

There are cases where the Divine Force acted instantaneously, where the Energy flowed so abundantly with such tremendous power that there were no lapses into the former state. There are also many more cases where the hampered one after many stumblings grew into power to rise above the evil habit. Whether the victim be yourself or an-

other whom you seek to help, in times of weakness and failure there must be the patience that forgives seventy times seven if necessary, and even while yielding to the habit to still hold positively, persistently, "God, Thou art here even now. Thy Spirit strengthens with might in the inner man and brings us off more than conquerors." It requires faith to help others in this way, but it is the "faith which worketh through love." (1)

The same Spirit that gives the victory over evil habits has also power over every other physical weakness if the victim but dare to trust himself to that power. Men of today who read the accounts of Jesus' work with the lame, the blind, the lepers, the diseased of every kind marvel over the results accomplished and wish such power were still with us on the earth. It is with us in the domain of the spirit nature; but being ignorant, we have neglected the gift; not having tested and proven it, we have no assurance that it exists. It is not irrational to infer that when Jesus said, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more

[1] Gal. 5: 6.

abundantly," (1) He meant not only an influx of spiritual power to overcome evil habits, distempers, selfishness, fear, and the like, but also that this same Spirit Power should stimulate us physically if we would apply it to that end.

It is not by ignoring the danger or disease, that one conquers; but rather by recognizing the need of help and calling on the Spirit within to stimulate the vital forces to the necessary action to protect from or eliminate the evil. It is taking time in the quietness and assurance of one's inner being to draw to one's self more of LIFE that Jesus represented. There is a tremendous, a vital difference between ignoring weakness of the flesh and applying the power of the Infinite Spirit of Life to the condition. The latter requires more positive, continuous effort than holding one's self to the methodical taking of a drug; but if the victim dare trust himself to that Unseen Physician, his unfaltering faith in that power to heal will bring abundant reward.

It is no easy task when beset by pain, or other indications of approaching ill-

[1] John 10: 10.

ness, to hold one's imagination back from the path toward which fear points and where doctors, nurses, and hospitals loom in misty outline with the contour of an open grave in the background. It is no trivial thing to restrain the fear excited imagination and trust confidently in the Unseen Spirit of Life to stimulate into activity sluggish organs or functions of the body and change conditions. Once, indeed, has the happy experience been mine of finding instantaneous relief that was permanent, but usually hours and sometimes days of quiet positive holding to His power working in me have been necessary to eradicate the forebodings of ill. The one experience, however, confirmed the belief that there is an unseen reservoir of healing power and strength for our use, and that when one learns through the Spirit how to connect with it, he will have found power to rise above the limitations of the flesh here and now, and that the natural birthright of freedom from pain and sickness will have been recovered.

Way back in the wilderness experience of the Hebrew race God speaks

through Moses of this same power, "For I am the Lord that healeth thee." [1] Later David exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." [2]

All through the Book are similar expressions of the power of our God to overcome physical ills, and many characters portrayed in it exercised that power; but it is Paul who phrases it in keeping with Jesus' teaching.

"If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." [3] This is in accord with Jesus' words: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." [4] To come into positive, conscious communion with the Great Father, the Spirit of Life and Power, and to learn to apply His power to our individual needs means freedom in the deepest sense—freedom from physical ills and evil habits, freedom from the harassing lash of fear, worry, and fretting, freedom from doubt and

[1] Ex. 15: 26. [2] Ps. 103: 2, 3.
[3] Rom. 8: 11. [4] John 6: 63.

the hopeless outlook into the great future that characterizes many a life.

He who seeks to enter into the realms of Spirit Power is constantly putting into practice and trying to grasp a little more of the greatest fact in life. To hold one's own noisy, desultory thought in abeyance and open the innermost of being to the Unseen Power, to still one's material thoughts in order to know that He is within and to learn His purpose for the life, this is as hard an exercise in concentration as any college course could give. The man in the physical gymnasium who can easily throw a hundred-pound weight finds a fifty-pound weight mere child's play; so the man in the mental gymnasium who exercises his brain forces on the hardest form of work and masters it finds minor tasks easy. Used only for gymnastic purposes the effect of such drill on mental faculties is marked, but there is a deeper and more important gain than this.

To find God within one's self and then to worship Him in spirit and in truth; to train the spirit to responsiveness to the Infinite Spirit and then to yield a willing, happy obedience that makes

Him truly "Lord and Master"—this is to bring self into personal contact with the Father, Creator, and Originator of Ideas. Now as in ages past, is He seeking for mediums through whom to express Himself; and now, as then, His work is limited only by the subject. To be responsive to Him means progress for the individual; means the highest development of the natural gifts with which one is endowed; means a noble service for the betterment of mankind. Often it means a leadership in some sphere of action in which the Spirit wishes to express Himself. In which direction the work shall lie, the Spirit decides. Paul says: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all;" [1] and after his catalogue of some of the gifts of the Spirit, he adds, "But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." [2]

This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter: It is possible for us to live consciously so that He is in us and

[1] I Cor. 12: 4, 6. [2] I Cor. 12: 11.

we in Him. ([1]) As the light gleaming in the lantern throws its rays in every direction and suffuses the lantern itself with the light which it radiates, so we, letting Him who is the Light of the world shine out from the center of our being, find not only our whole being full of Light, but that this Light radiates from us in every direction as a subtle pervasive influence. Not only does it make plain the path of life for the individual, but it has power to protect and acts as an invisible guard to ward off harm and evil; it has power within the individual to change conditions and to heal; and also it is powerful in quickening or awakening the natural spirit in another to desire Him whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ([2])

A great treasure is hidden in these earthen vessels, our mortal bodies; a treasure fully equal to every need of man. Being ignorant of its power, not having proved its efficacy, we doubt its existence or ability, and so suffer; but it is denied to none, for this is "the

[1] I John 3: 24. [2] Is. 9: 6.

true Light which," John said, "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (1) This is also the mystery of our religion which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but was made manifest in Jesus Christ. All the power and all the mystery is made clear to us when we know "Christ in us, the hope of glory." (2)

Then call upon Him, and "He will grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man:

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height:

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"For he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."(3)

[1] John 1: 9. [2] Col. 1: 27. [3] Eph. 3: 16-21.

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